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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Kuwait, Iraq, Lebanon,
Palestinian Territories, Syria/Italy (5/12-14)

¶1. Summary: Syria papers reported that Syria denied Friday evening Jordanian claims on the training of Hamas members in Syria and criticized the UNSC bid to issue a resolution on Syria and Lebanon as "an obstacle to clearing the air."

Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem said in a joint press conference with his Kuwaiti counterpart Mohammed Salem al-Sabah that "the Jordanian claim that Hamas members, who are trained in Syria, have entered Jordan is inaccurate."

"Syria is concerned about Jordan and about the Jordanian people as well as their security and is eager to develop relations between Syria and Jordan," he said.

Asked about Syria's stance over the expected US-French UNSC resolution on Syria, Minister Mouallem said "ties between sisterly countries Syria and Lebanon do not need internationalization and what the UNSC is trying to do is just to block attempts to clear the air between Syria and Lebanon."

And if there is Syrian mediation between Iran and the Gulf countries, Mouallem said "contacts between Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries already exist and there is no need for mediators."

At the beginning of the press conference, Mouallem said that he had conveyed to his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Sabah, who invited him to visit Kuwait, what Syria has heard from the Iranian side, noting that he had listened attentively to the explanation made and will convey that to the Syrian leadership.

Asked about statements of US Assistant Secretary of State David Welch that Syria is the only country outside Lebanon that is accused of assassinating former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, Mouallem asked, "I wonder why he doesn't issue his documents" and stressed "I challenge that he has no proof" noting that "Syria is the most affected party from the assassination of the late al-Hariri."

For his part, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah said "we have

talked about the role Kuwait might have to help to boost economic openness in Syria saying "there is a Syrian-Kuwaiti joint committee that will meet next month in Syria and that is a most welcome point." He said that discussions with Foreign Minister Mouallem have underlined the importance for the neighboring countries of Iraq to hold a meeting as soon as possible after the Iraqi government formation for discussion with brothers in Iraq and to put a joint vision for the upcoming Iraqi role as well as the role of neighboring countries in Iraq's security and stability. Sheikh Sabah said "we talked about Iran's nuclear file, the situation in Palestine and how to aid the Palestinian people as well as the need to acknowledge the Arab peace initiative and respect the Palestinian people's decision to elect the one who represents them.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Kuwaiti Prince and Prime Minister receive Foreign Minister Mouallem, and review regional issues and encouraging investments. Sabah admires President Asad's developmental views on boosting the economy. Mouallem: Damascus doors are opened for all Arab brothers" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Syrian-Kuwaiti talks to boost ties and discuss the latest developments in the region. Foreign Minister Mouallem voices readiness to hold dialogue with the US noting there are no secret channels with Bush administration. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Sabah: Syria is working to serve Arab interests... Kuwait will contribute to Syria's economic process" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/13)

"Qaddoumi discusses Palestinian developments with Foreign Minister Mouallem. Vice President Shara receives an Iraqi delegation reiterating the importance of maintaining Iraq's integrity" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/12)

"President Asad holds talks with Mayor of Istanbul and calls for increasing Syrian investments in Turkey. Asad receives Farouk Al-Qaddoumi Chairman of PLO Political Bureau and confirms: Dialogue is the solution for inter-Palestinian disagreements" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/12)

"Palestinian FM Al-Zahhar: Hamas has no connection with smuggling arms to Jordan... Hamas officials are ready to visit Jordan to end the crisis" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Israeli occupation forces disperse an anti-separation wall demonstration in Ramallah by force. Red Crescent confirms lack of food and medical equipment in Gaza Strip" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Abbas accelerates appeal for international aid before the catastrophe exacerbates. One Palestinian martyred, ten wounded in the West Bank" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/13)

"Lebanese circles warn against failure of the national dialogue" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Repercussions of the Beirut demonstration of last Wednesday aggravate tension on the eve of national dialogue resumption in Lebanon. Four military Lebanese killed in a helicopter crash over Bekaa valley" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/13)

"Ten Israeli jet fighters violate Lebanese airspace, reaching Beirut. Lahoud: Syria has maintained Lebanon's unity" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/12)

"An American soldier killed in Baghdad. The Iraqi government will be announced tomorrow" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/14)

"Al-Fadila party withdraws from the Iraqi government. Four marines killed in Anbaar, Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/13)

"Four US soldiers killed in Baghdad and Mosul. Disputes postpone announcement of the Iraqi government" (Government-owned Al-

Thawra, 5/12)

"President Asad congratulates election of Napolitano as president of Italy" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/12)

3. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Wagering on Foreigners"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/13): "We know that the current US Administration is prepared to present more draft resolutions to the UN Security Council to harm and even besiege Syria. But we also know that some other big and influential powers in today's world stand on the side of justice and refuse to get involved in American plans that are based on false foundations and predetermined hostile positions toward Syria.

"For more than five years, Bush's administration has never stopped applying pressure on Syria and directing accusations and fabricating lies against it. But other superpowers, like Russia and China, reject the continuation of the pressure on Syria and assert that there is no need for new Security Council resolutions against it.

"Now the Bush administration wants to obtain a Security Council resolution demanding that Syria establish diplomatic relations with Lebanon. Since when has the establishment of diplomatic relations between countries been an American or an international affair? Can other countries ask the Security Council to issue resolutions demanding that the United States establish

diplomatic relations with this country or that? Has Bush's administration forgotten that for half a century the United States has not recognized the government in Cuba and has imposed a relentless unjust siege on this country and its people?

"What is more remarkable is that while friendly countries in the East and the West stand in the face of the pressure policy that the Bush administration is pursuing against Syria, some 'Arab brothers' volunteer to work, free of charge, for the American master. They fabricate lies that harm Syria and the struggle of the Palestinian people, or they make malicious accusations against Syria from Washington and New York in an exposed harmony between the neoconservatives who plan the US policy and groups and individuals in the region who accepted to mortgage themselves to foreigners and to abandon their national identity; who considered Syria, not Israel, their archenemy; and who stood in the American-Israel trench against nationalism, pan-Arabism, and resistance.

"But we trust that these people represent only themselves. The entire Arab nation, on the other hand, supports Syria. All the friendly, honorable, and peace- and justice-loving nations in the world also support Syria. So Syria needs not fear as long as it wagers on all these and on right and justice."

"Unjust Policies"

Muhammad Ali Buza, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/12): "The international quartet's meeting in New York was part of the campaign of American-Zionist pressure against Palestinians. Its aim was to tighten siege on the Palestinian people and punish them for their democratic choice, which brought HAMAS to power, and wrest unfair positions and policies that would deepen tension and allow the Israeli terrorism to proceed with the policy of belligerence, siege, starvation, slaughter, and liquidation of the Palestinian people....

"The Quartet failed to prove its credibility and role as a supportive power entrusted with achieving stability and peace in the Middle East.... The Quartet, on the other hand, showed that it goes along with the American policy in its support for Israel in its continuous wars and aggression against the Arabs.... This would only prolong the crisis in the region.... Arabs, in coordination with the forces of freedom and peace in the world, need to apply pressure to change these policies and stop their champions from participating in the crime of punishing and destroying the Palestinian people...."

"Extending Bridges by Understanding, not by Spying"

Haytham Salih, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/12): "The US endeavor to market big lies in its foreign policy on spreading democracy, namely its outreach initiative to build bridges between American intelligence agencies and Arabs and Muslims in the state of Michigan,

"Bridge-building, though a beautiful name with many positive meanings that all the nations of the world call for, is in fact nothing but an intelligence game invented by the neoconservatives after the 11 September events to recruit people to spy on others in favor of the American military mentality....

"Bridges between the US Administration and Arabs and Muslims inside and outside the United States cannot be built by recruiting Arabs to spy on their brothers and the sons of their nation, or by eavesdropping on their conversations, monitoring their movements, or dealing with them as suspects. Nor can they

be built by labeling Arabs as terrorists or potential terrorists or viewing them with a suspicious eye. Rather, they can be built through equality, respect, and trust for them inside the United States, and through understanding, dialogue, balanced relations, and noninterference in the domestic affairs of the Arab countries in our region."

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